

# Joseph

CARPENTER OF STEEL

**Bible Study  
Discussion Guide**

Rev. Wayne Palmer

# Joseph



For hundreds and thousands of years carpenters plied their trade with hand tools like hammers, saws, planes and files. For most of them carpentry wasn't a road to riches, fame or power. It was the way you put a roof over your head, food on your family's table and clothes on your children's backs.

In this **Men's NetWork** Bible study, we look at one of these men, a common, ordinary carpenter. Like countless guys before and after him, he lived his life in obscurity, working hard to support his family and do his part in his community. He may not have worked with steel, but as we will see, Joseph was a carpenter with the character, courage and strength of steel.

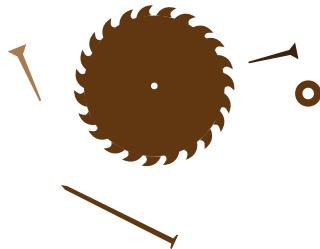
## For the Leader:

This four-session Bible study about Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus is designed to fit into the Christmas season, but would really be appropriate at any time.

- **Session 1** speaks of Joseph's struggle over what to do when he discovers Mary is pregnant with a child he knows isn't his. It would fit very well into the Advent season in late November or early December.
- **Session 2** tells the familiar Christmas story of Joseph searching for a suitable place for Jesus' birth. It would be most timely at Christmas or in mid to late December.
- **Session 3** speaks of the coming of the wise men and Joseph stepping up to save Jesus from King Herod. It is extremely appropriate for Epiphany or early January.
- **Session 4** deals with Joseph's frantic search for the lost 12-year-old Jesus, as well as the legacy he left his family. It fits nicely into late January or February.

Please also encourage your group members to check out our **Digging Deeper** boxes. Because of time constraints our videos and discussion questions can only scratch the surface of the people, places and events of Christ's birth as seen from Joseph's perspective. The web links in our **Digging Deeper** boxes offer an opportunity to learn significantly more about those facets of the Christmas story, which each guys finds most interesting. Whether it's the wise men, their star, King Herod's paranoia or Jerusalem's attractions, they can learn a great deal more about the society and cultural world in which our Savior lived.

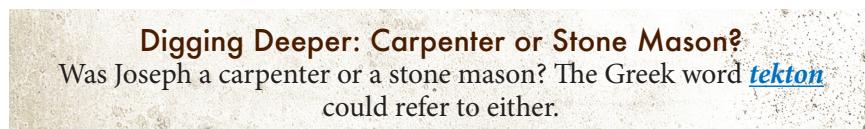
We recommend downloading the electronic version of the discussion guide (see "Having Difficulty Making the Web Links Work?" on the next page) and then forwarding to group members by e-mail.



## Getting the Most from This Discussion Guide

**Group Discussion:** Please feel free to move at your own pace through this study and take as much time as you need for each session. You are welcome to dig in as deep as you want for your personal study, but for group study you may prefer to just use the Bible passages and questions included in the discussion guide. We have designed our questions to be open-ended, thus allowing the men in your group to share their experiences and unique perspectives.

This is an interactive study guide. We designed it to be flexible to fit both your group and personal use. The electronic version includes boxes (like the non-working sample box below), which provide extra information and links to Internet sites where you can browse and dig as deep as you want.



## Having Difficulty Making the Web Links Work?

At the end of this study a full list of web addresses is given.

If you don't want to have to type them in, you can download the electronic copy of the discussion guide and simply click on the blue hyperlink. Here is a step-by-step guide to find the electronic copy with the working links:

- 1) Log on to [www.lhmmen.com/studies.asp](http://www.lhmmen.com/studies.asp).
- 2) Choose this study from the page by clicking the underlined title (located to the right of the study's graphic).
- 3) On the bottom of this page, click "download videos & materials."
- 4) Enter your e-mail address and password (and register, if necessary).
- 5) Find this study guide, then click the "download now" button.
- 6) In the File Download box, click the "save" button.
- 7) Save it to your desktop.
- 8) Click on the file to open it.

Now you can click the hyperlinks (underlined words or phrases) that interest you and start digging.

**To This Discussion Guide User:** Because of the changing nature of the Internet, occasionally a web link included in a Men's NetWork Bible study may change or be deleted altogether by the agency or individual posting it. When you notice an Internet link has been modified or has become inoperable, please report this to the Men's NetWork so we can adjust future editions of this discussion guide. Thank you.

Please send changes to [mensnetwork@lhm.org](mailto:mensnetwork@lhm.org).

## Session 1 A CARPENTER MADE OF STEEL

### Opening Prayer

Almighty God, as I learn more about the man You chose to be Your Son's foster-father, help me to see myself more clearly as well. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

- What was the first thing you remember making with your own hands?

### Watch the Video: Session 1

When Joseph learned Mary was pregnant with a child he knew was not his, he had to ask himself, "Should I go through with the wedding or call it off?"

- When you have to make a big decision in a hurry, how much do you go by your gut and how much do you try to think through the consequences?
- After you've reached a decision are you more inclined to reconsider that decision or stick to your guns?

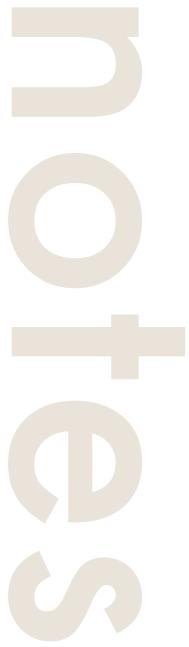
Joseph thought it out and decided he could not continue his betrothal and marriage plans with Mary. He could have divorced her publicly to protect his reputation, but he decided to do it quietly to protect her life.

- What does Joseph's self-sacrifice show you about him?
- What problems would you have making his decision?

After Joseph had made up his mind, God sent an angel in a dream telling him to do the opposite. As we will see in the coming sessions, God often sent an angel in a dream to communicate His will to Joseph.

- How does God communicate to us today?
- How can we be sure it is God guiding us and not our own thoughts?
- How does prayer help us wrestle with a difficult decision?
- How can the Bible guide our decisions?

Joseph obeyed God's instructions and took Mary as his wife, regardless of the consequences or fallout.



## Jesus' Toughest Decision

Deciding whether to divorce Mary was probably one of Joseph's most difficult decisions. Thirty-some years later, Mary's son Jesus had a tough decision of His own to make. It came the night before He was to be arrested, tried and condemned to die on the cross. After supper He went with His disciples to a garden where He struggled to decide if He should go to the cross or search for another way.

**Read Luke 22:39-46.**

- 39 And He (Jesus) came out and went, as was His custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed Him.
- 40 And when He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."
- 41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed,
- 42 saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done."
- 43 And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him.
- 44 And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.
- 45 And when He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow,
- 46 and He said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

This was clearly a difficult decision for Jesus, but in the end He knew it was His Heavenly Father's will for Him to suffer and die. For through His death and resurrection He would win forgiveness and eternal life for each of us. Like Joseph, Jesus faced a great risk deciding to obey God's will. For Joseph it meant the possible destruction of his reputation; for Jesus it meant the loss of His life on the cross. But the payoffs were enormous: Joseph's obedience made him the foster-father of God's own Son; Jesus' obedience made Him the Savior of the world.

## Closing Prayer

Holy Father, give me courage to follow Your will like Joseph—no matter what may result. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

### Digging Deeper: Carpentry Tools History

This [article](#) describes how carpentry tools have developed from ancient times to today.

### Digging Deeper: Arranged Marriages

This [article](#) discusses how betrothal and marriage worked in Bible times.

This [article](#) cites biblical and Jewish sources to describe the ancient procedures for betrothal.

This [article](#) provides information about arranged marriages, including where they are taking place around the world today.

### Digging Deeper: Mary's Shame?

This [article](#) by Lynn Cohick explores whether Mary faced the social stigma of being an unmarried mother, or did she only face the possibility of losing her betrothed husband Joseph?

### Digging Deeper: Augustus' Censuses

What did Caesar Augustus consider his greatest achievements? This [site](#) presents Augustus' list of accomplishments. If you want to jump to his three censuses, look at number eight on this [page](#).

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE STUDY SO FAR?

You can be honest. Post your thoughts

on the **Men's NetWork Forum**;

(look for this study under "Men's NetWork Stuff").

**[www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp](http://www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp)**

## Session 2 THE CHRISTMAS STORY

### Opening Prayer

Father in heaven, in times when I am in need or want, give me the confidence that You will provide whatever I need. Teach me thankfulness and contentment. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

- Where is the worst place you have ever had to spend the night?

### Watch the Video: Session 2

The Bible doesn't reveal what Joseph thought about the humble shelter he found for Mary and her son Jesus. But if many of us found ourselves in a similar situation we would struggle with the fact that we couldn't provide better accommodations for our family.

- What lessons has God taught you or someone you know during difficult times?

Whatever Joseph might have felt about the poor surroundings he found himself in, God's will made perfect sense. Even a golden cradle would have been poor compared to the riches and glories of heaven Jesus left behind to share our life in this poor, dark world. Jesus would visit far worse places than this lowly manger to save us from God's wrath.

- What does the manger teach you about Jesus humility and contentment?
- What is the key to being content with your situation in life?

As if being born and placed in a feeding trough wasn't strange enough, God chose an unlikely group of people to be the first to hear the good news of His Son's birth. Shepherds were treated with contempt by the rabbis because their work often kept them from the synagogue and they failed to fulfill the Law. But God delights in showing His grace to the lowest of the low. And Jesus gave them a second honor when He later identified Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10).

During His ministry Jesus often made it a habit of revealing God's grace to lowly individuals. Once traveling through Jerusalem He came across a man born blind.

### Read John 9:1-7, 13-17, 28-41.

- 1 As He (Jesus) passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.
- 2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"
- 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."
- 4 We must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.
- 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."
- 6 Having said these things, He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then He anointed the man's eyes with the mud
- 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.



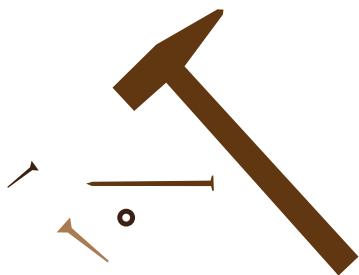
- 13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.
- 14 Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.
- 15 So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."
- 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" and there was a division among them.
- 17 So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about Him, since He has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."
  
- 28 And they reviled him, saying, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.
- 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from."
- 30 The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes.
- 31 "We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, God listens to him.
- 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.
- 33 If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."
- 34 They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.
- 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"
- 36 He answered, "And who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?"
- 37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen Him, and it is He who is speaking to you."
- 38 He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped Him.
- 39 Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."
- 40 Some of the Pharisees near Him heard these things, and said to Him, "Are we also blind?"
- 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

Jesus shows us why God permitted that man to be born blind. It was so that when he encountered Jesus his eyes could be healed and he could see the Savior of the world—God's own Son, Jesus—with his own eyes. At the same time the evidence of his healing and his brave words would give a powerful testimony to the Jewish leaders that Jesus was indeed God's omnipotent Son.

- When you go through tough times what message do you think God is trying to give you?
- How have you seen God use a difficult circumstance in your life to your good and His glory?

### Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, this may not be the best time for my family, but remind us You are here to provide for all our needs. Help us trust Your love for Jesus' sake so we can recognize Your deeds of kindness and spread the news of Your goodness everywhere we go. In Jesus' Name. Amen.



### Digging Deeper: Bethlehem

This [website](#) discusses how Bethlehem appears today, and the ways it commemorates the birth of Jesus. This [article](#) describes Bethlehem's location and setting and discusses its history from ancient times to the birth of Jesus Christ. This [article](#) describes Bethlehem's history from the Old Testament, through Jesus' birth to today.

### Digging Deeper: Finding a Place for Mary to Give Birth

Read an [excerpt](#) about Jesus' birth in Bethlehem from Paul L. Maier's book, *The First Christmas*.

### Digging Deeper: The Inn

This [article](#) discusses the different ways the Greek word for "inn" can be translated.

### Digging Deeper: Justin Martyr – The Cave

[Justin Martyr](#) was born only 40 miles from Bethlehem. He wrote that Jesus was born in a cave near Bethlehem. (Scroll down to chapter 78, and you can read where Justin Martyr speaks of the wise men, Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' birth in a cave.)

### Digging Deeper: The Despised Shepherds

This [article](#) includes a nice description of first-century shepherds and cites ancient rabbinic (Jewish) writings to learn why they were often despised in Jewish society.

### Digging Deeper: Angels

This [article](#) describes the angels and their work.

### Digging Deeper: Dating the First Christmas

In this in-depth [article](#), Dr. Paul L. Maier searches through the evidence to see how closely we can pin down the date of Christ's birth.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE STUDY SO FAR?

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## Session 3 JOSEPH THE GUARDIAN

### Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, through Joseph You protected and provided for Your Son. Work through me to bless my family and friends. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

- What responsibilities does a man have for his family?
- Describe some of the enemies from which he needs to protect his family.

### Watch the Video: Session 3

### Joseph's Dreams

In key moments in very special circumstances God communicated His will directly to Joseph by angels through dreams.

- Why was it necessary that God speak to Joseph through these divine dreams?
- What ways could God communicate directly to you?
- How could we be certain it is God communicating?

Matthew only records four divine dreams through which God revealed His will directly to Joseph. For the vast majority of his life, Joseph relied on the promises of the Old Testament Bible to reassure him of God's active involvement in his life. Though God can communicate His will to us in any way He chooses, we can be assured He is speaking to us whenever we read His Bible and receive His reassurance in Baptism and Communion.

### Joseph the Provider

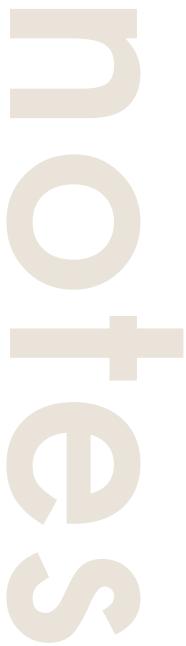
God gave Joseph a very marketable skill in being a builder in wood and stone. Through that skill he provided for his family and made an important contribution to his community.

- What are the greatest challenges you face in providing for your family?

Joseph knew it wasn't enough to provide the physical needs of his family; he needed to provide for their spiritual needs too. He made sure his foster-son Jesus got off to a good start in His faith by bringing Him to the rabbi to be circumcised at the appropriate time and taking Him to the temple to present Him to the Lord.

- Why is it important for a dad to be mindful of his family's eternal future and not just their earthly future?

In the wake of the unexpected arrival of the wise men, God warned Joseph to flee to protect His Son's life. Taking God's warning seriously, Joseph arose in the middle of the night and immediately led his wife and her Son to safety in Egypt.



In the middle of a night many years later, Jesus rose up to protect His disciples and send them off safely while He remained behind to be captured, condemned and put to death on a cross. This reading begins with Jesus' prayer to His Father in chapter 17; it then continues as He protects His disciples during His arrest in chapter 18.

**Read John 18:1-12.**

- 1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.
- 2 Now Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with His disciples.
- 3 So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.
- 4 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to Him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"
- 5 They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." Judas, who betrayed Him, was standing with them.
- 6 When Jesus said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.
- 7 So He asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."
- 8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He. So, if you seek Me, let these men go."
- 9 This was to fulfill the word that He had spoken: "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost not one."
- 10 Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)
- 11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given Me?"
- 12 So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.

Jesus put Himself in harm's way to protect us. He offered Himself to crucifixion and death in our place to save us from the eternal punishment in hell we deserve because of our sins.

- Describe how Jesus took charge of the situation so He could send His followers away safely.
- How have you seen Jesus protect you or someone you know from harm?

### Closing Prayer

Father, I praise You for men like Joseph who faithfully protect their families, but I especially thank You for Your fatherly protection in Jesus Christ, Your Son. Guard and deliver me from all danger that I may protect my family and friends as I share Your Word with them and bring them to Your house. In Jesus' Name. Amen.



### Digging Deeper: Leading Your Family

To help you lead your family, the Men's NetWork has produced a video Bible study by Dr. Joel Biermann called "[Fatherhood](#)".

### Digging Deeper: Jesus' First 40 Days

This Jewish [site](#) speaks of ancient traditions that continue today when a child is born. These include circumcision, naming the child and redeeming a firstborn male.

### Digging Deeper: Wise Men

Searching history, Dr. Paul L. Maier asks if the visit of the wise men is [fact or fiction?](#)

The [Catholic Encyclopedia](#) discusses what we know of the wise men, including testimony from the Church Fathers. This interesting [article](#) speaks of the magi and the Christmas star.

### Digging Deeper: The Christmas Star

This in-depth [website](#) discusses a possible natural explanation of the Christmas star and how it could have led the wise men to worship the King of the Jews.

This [site](#) offers natural explanations for the Christmas star, including visual graphics and movies which illustrate how the star may have appeared from the earth.

### Digging Deeper: Herod the Great

This Jewish Encyclopedia [article](#) goes into great detail about the ambition and cruelty of Herod—both as he rose to power and as he sought to hold on to that power. (Note in the last paragraph, after recounting all Herod's murderous ambitions, the author's personal feelings regarding Herod killing the infants of Bethlehem.)

### Digging Deeper: How Accurate Are the Biblical Accounts?

To consider the authenticity and accuracy of the biblical accounts, watch these Men's NetWork videos: "[How We Got The Bible](#)" and "[The Bible On Trial](#)".

### Digging Deeper: Did Herod Really Massacre the Infants?

In this [article](#) Gordon Franz asks if this famous event actually occurred.

### Digging Deeper: How Did King Herod Die?

In this [article](#) Josephus describes Herod's grisly death.

### Digging Deeper: Jewish Settlements in Egypt

This [article](#) describes the turmoil Jews experienced in Egypt during the period between the Old and New Testaments.

This [article](#) traces the history of Jews in Egypt from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. until today.



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## Session 4 A CARPENTER'S LEGACY

### Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, everything I do influences someone, especially my family and friends. Strengthen my relationship with You so I will be a positive influence. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

- What spiritual influence did your father have on you?
- What spiritual legacy do you want to leave for your family and friends?

### Watch the Video: Session 4

After his last two divine dreams in Egypt, Joseph returned to Nazareth to raise his family. As he reestablished his carpentry business, Joseph continued building on the spiritual foundation he had laid for his family. He made a custom of going to the synagogue and making annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

In one of those pilgrimages- Jesus' twelfth, Jesus was accidentally left behind in the temple. When Mary found Him and rebuked Him for causing them so much worry Jesus gave a seemingly flippant answer, "Why were you looking for Me? Did you now know that I must be in My Father's house?"

- Why are some people troubled by the tone of Jesus' answer?

This sounds like a typical rebellious teenager's response. But it wasn't. In her anxiety and fear, Mary had forgotten who Jesus truly was. So He carefully shifted Mary and Joseph's thinking about Him and His work in this world. Jesus had not come merely to be a carpenter, but to save the world. At the same time He gently shifted Joseph's view of his own life- he was not on earth merely to be a carpenter, but to be the earthly foster-father to God's Son, the world's Savior.

- In what ways is your life more than just the work you do?
- What special role do you have in your family?

### Joseph's Legacy

Joseph led his family to the yearly festivals in Jerusalem and left a powerful legacy after he died. Jesus reflected Joseph's legacy in His custom of attending the synagogue every Sabbath.

- How frequently do you want your children to worship when they are grown and raising families of their own?
- How important is it for children to see their father worshiping beside them?
- What does it say to children if dad just warms a pew at church but doesn't participate in worship?

Joseph left a powerful legacy to Jesus and the rest of his family, a legacy that showed itself in how Jesus lived. Jesus Himself never married or had children, but He left a powerful legacy for His disciples just as Joseph had left for Him. In Acts 3 and 4 we see them live out the legacy He left for them- just as He had lived out the legacy Joseph had left for Him.

**Read Acts 3:1-10; 4:5-22.**

- 1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.
- 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.
- 3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.
- 4 And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.”
- 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.
- 6 But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”
- 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.
- 8 And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.
- 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms.
- 10 And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.
  
- 5 On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem,
- 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.
- 7 And when they had set them in their midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?”
- 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders,
- 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,
- 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well.
- 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.
- 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.
- 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.
- 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.
- 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another,

- 16 saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.
- 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.”
- 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the Name of Jesus.
- 19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,
- 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”
- 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened.
- 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

Peter and John were changed by the time they had spent with Jesus—both before and after His death and resurrection. They learned that Jesus had suffered and died to take away the sins of all people and win eternal life for each of us in heaven. They then eagerly shared that message of salvation through faith in Jesus with everyone they met. In their bold witness Peter and John left a legacy of their own for the Early Church and their followers.

- Which people have been great spiritual mentors for you in your lifetime?
- How can you be a great spiritual mentor for others around you?

### **Closing Prayer**

Heavenly Father, my time on this earth is brief. Help me make the most of every moment to the glory of Your Name and the good of Your people. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

### Digging Deeper: Herod Archelaus

This [article](#) describes Archelaus' rule and the reasons Joseph was afraid to bring Jesus and Mary back to Bethlehem. This is another [article](#) about Archelaus' brief rule.

### Digging Deeper: Herod Antipas

This [article](#) describes the life of Herod Antipas. He ruled Galilee, the region where Jesus grew up and conducted most of His public ministry.

### Digging Deeper: Nazareth

This [article](#) describes Jesus' boyhood hometown of Nazareth and gives its history from the Old Testament until today.

### Digging Deeper: Nazareth's Important Neighbor

Nazareth would have been a small, insignificant little village if not for its neighbor, Sepphoris. When Herod the Great was named king over this region, it rebelled and was put down with a bloody siege. When he died, it rebelled again and was burned, and its inhabitants were sold into slavery by Varus, the new Roman governor of Syria. For more information read this [article](#).

King Herod's son Antipas rebuilt this capital of Galilee during the time Jesus was a child and young man. Being only three or four miles from Nazareth, Sephoris would have had a big impact on Joseph and his family, as they likely helped in its construction. This [website](#) explores the effect Sephoris might have had on Jesus and other Jews living and working in Nazareth.

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- These three towers guarded Herod's fabulous [palace](#). After his son Archelaus was exiled and replaced by Roman governors, this building was used as the governor's residence during the Jewish Passover. It may have been the site of Jesus' trial before Roman governor Pontius Pilate. In this [article](#), Josephus gives an eye-witness description.
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WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE STUDY?

You can be honest. Post your thoughts

on the **Men's NetWork Forum**;

(look for this study under "Men's NetWork Stuff").

**[www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp](http://www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp)**

## FULL LIST OF LINKS USED IN DIGGING DEEPER BOXES THROUGHOUT THIS STUDY:

### Session 1: A Carpenter Made of Steel

#### Digging Deeper: Carpentry Tools History

- This article describes how carpentry tools have developed from ancient times to today:  
[http://www.ehow.com/about\\_5057096\\_carpentry-tools-history.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_5057096_carpentry-tools-history.html)

#### Digging Deeper: Arranged Marriages

- This article discusses how betrothal and marriage worked in Bible times:  
<http://www.bibleistrue.com/qna/qna22.htm>
- This article cites biblical and Jewish sources to describe the ancient procedures for betrothal:  
<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=995&letter=B>
- This article provides information about arranged marriages, including where they are taking place around the world today: <http://www.professorshouse.com/Relationships/Marriage-Advice/Articles/Arranged-Marriage-Facts/>

#### Digging Deeper: Mary's Shame?

- This article by Lynn Cohick explores whether Mary faced the social stigma of being an unmarried mother, or did she only face the possibility of losing her betrothed husband Joseph?: [http://blog.christianitytoday.com/women/2009/12/was\\_mary\\_ashamed\\_to\\_be\\_pregnant\\_1.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/women/2009/12/was_mary_ashamed_to_be_pregnant_1.html)

#### Digging Deeper: Augustus' Censuses

- What did Caesar Augustus consider his greatest achievements? This site presents Augustus' list of accomplishments. [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Augustus/Res\\_Gestae/home.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Augustus/Res_Gestae/home.html)
- If you want to jump to his three censuses, look at number eight on this page:  
[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Augustus/Res\\_Gestae/2\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Augustus/Res_Gestae/2*.html)

## Session 2: The Christmas Story

### Digging Deeper: Bethlehem

- This website discusses how Bethlehem appears today, and the ways it commemorates the birth of Jesus: <http://www.bibleplaces.com/bethlehem.htm>
- This article describes Bethlehem's location and setting and discusses its history from ancient times to the birth of Jesus Christ: <http://www.ancientsandals.com/overviews/bethlehem.htm>
- This article describes Bethlehem's history from the Old Testament, through Jesus' birth to today: <http://www.holylandnetwork.com/bethlehem/bethlehem.htm>

### Digging Deeper: Finding a Place for Mary to Give Birth

- Read an excerpt about Jesus' birth in Bethlehem from Paul L. Maier's book, *The First Christmas*: <http://www.mtio.com/articles/bissar71.htm>

### Digging Deeper: The Inn

- This article discusses the different ways the Greek word for "inn" can be translated: <http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/I/INN/>

### Digging Deeper: Justin Martyr – The Cave

- Justin Martyr was born only 40 miles from Bethlehem. He wrote that Jesus was born in a cave near Bethlehem. (Scroll down to chapter 78, and you can read where Justin Martyr speaks of the wise men, Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' birth in a cave.): <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01286.htm>

### Digging Deeper: The Despised Shepherds

- This article includes a nice description of first-century shepherds and cites ancient rabbinic (Jewish) writings to learn why they were often despised in Jewish society: [http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/2\\_8-20.htm](http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/2_8-20.htm)

### Digging Deeper: Angels

- This article describes the angels and their work: <http://classic.lcms.org/pages/wPage.asp?ContentID=883&IssueID=50>

### Digging Deeper: Dating the First Christmas

- In this in-depth article, Dr. Paul L. Maier searches through the evidence to see how closely we can pin down the date of Christ's birth: <http://www.biblicalfoundations.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/maier-date-of-the-nativity.pdf>

## Session 3: Joseph the Guardian

### Digging Deeper: Leading Your Family

- To help you lead your family the Men's NetWork has produced a video Bible study by Dr. Joel Biermann called *Fatherhood*: <http://www.lhmmen.com/studydetail.asp?id=17978>

### Digging Deeper: Jesus' First 40 Days

- This Jewish site speaks of ancient traditions that continue today when a child is born. These include circumcision, naming the child and redeeming a firstborn male: <http://www.jewfaq.org/birth.htm>

### Digging Deeper: The Wise Men

- Searching history, Dr. Paul L. Maier asks if the visit of the wise men is fact or fiction?: <http://classic.lcms.org/pages/wPage.asp?ContentID=903&IssueID=50>
- The Catholic Encyclopedia discusses what we know of the wise men, including testimony from the Church Fathers: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09527a.htm>
- This interesting article speaks of the magi and the Christmas star: <http://bibleencyclopedia.com/magi.htm>

### Digging Deeper: The Christmas Star

- This in-depth website discusses a possible natural explanation of the Christmas star and how it could have led the wise men to worship the King of the Jews: <http://www.bethlehemstar.net/>
- This site offers natural explanations for the Christmas star, including visual graphics and movies which illustrate how the star may have appeared from the earth: [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3077385/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/astronomers-still-wondering-about-star-wonder/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3077385/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/astronomers-still-wondering-about-star-wonder/)

### Digging Deeper: Herod the Great

- The Jewish Encyclopedia goes into great detail about the ambition and cruelty of Herod—both as he rose to power and as he sought to hold on to that power. (Note in the last paragraph, after recounting all Herod's murderous ambitions, the author's personal feelings regarding Herod killing the infants of Bethlehem): <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=630&letter=H&search=herod%20the%20great>

### Digging Deeper: How Accurate are the Biblical Accounts?

- To consider the authenticity and accuracy of the biblical accounts, watch these Men's NetWork videos: *How We Got The Bible*: <http://www.lhmmen.com/studydetail.asp?id=12754> and *The Bible On Trial*: <http://www.lhmmen.com/studydetail.asp?id=16902>

### **Digging Deeper: Did Herod Really Massacre the Infants?**

- In this article Gordon Franz asks if this famous event actually occurred: <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2009/12/09/The-Slaughter-of-the-Innocents-Historical-Fact-or-Legendary-Fiction.aspx#Article>

### **Digging Deeper: How Did King Herod Die?**

- In this article Josephus describes Herod's grisly death: <http://www.interhack.net/projects/library/wars-jews/b1c33.html>

### **Digging Deeper: Jewish Settlements in Egypt**

- This article describes the turmoil Jews experienced in Egypt during the period between the Old and New Testaments: [http://classes.maxwell.syr.edu/his301-001/jeishh\\_diaspora\\_in\\_greece.htm](http://classes.maxwell.syr.edu/his301-001/jeishh_diaspora_in_greece.htm)
- This article traces the history of Jews in Egypt from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. until today: <http://www.bh.org.il/news-item.aspx?85040>

## Session 4: A Carpenter's Legacy

### Digging Deeper: Herod Archelaus

- This article describes Archelaus' rule and the reasons Joseph was afraid to bring Jesus and Mary back to Bethlehem: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1729&letter=A>
- This is another article about Archelaus' brief rule: [http://www.livius.org/he-hg/herodians/herod\\_archelaus.htm](http://www.livius.org/he-hg/herodians/herod_archelaus.htm)

### Digging Deeper: Herod Antipas

- This article describes the life of Herod Antipas. He ruled Galilee, the region where Jesus grew up and conducted most of His public ministry: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1597&letter=A&search=herod%20antipas>

### Digging Deeper: Nazareth

- This article describes Jesus' boyhood hometown of Nazareth and gives its history from the Old Testament until today: <http://www.holylandnetwork.com/nazareth/nazareth.htm>

### Digging Deeper: Nazareth's Important Neighbor

- Nazareth would have been a small, insignificant little village if not for its neighbor, Sepphoris. When Herod the Great was named king over this region, it rebelled and was put down with a bloody siege. When he died, it rebelled again and was burned, and its inhabitants were sold into slavery by Varus, the new Roman governor of Syria. For more information read this article: <http://virtualreligion.net/ihc/sepphoris.html>
- King Herod's son Antipas rebuilt this capital of Galilee during the time Jesus was a child and young man. Being only three or four miles from Nazareth, Sepphoris would have had a big impact on Joseph and his family, as they likely helped in its construction. This website explores the effect Sepphoris might have had on Jesus and other Jews living and working in Nazareth: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/jesus/socialclass.html>

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- West and to the south of the temple grounds were several spectacular buildings of King Herod the Great. Many pre-teen boys would be drawn to the three huge towers that guarded Herod's grand palace. In the center stood the 145-foot-tall Phasael Tower, named after Herod's brother: [http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem\\_herod\\_s\\_three\\_towers.html](http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem_herod_s_three_towers.html)
- Read this article to learn more about Phasael: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=254&letter=P&search=Phasael>
- The second tallest, standing at 132 feet was the Hippicus Tower, named after a friend of Herod, a general who had been killed in battle: [http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem\\_hippicus\\_tower.html](http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem_hippicus_tower.html)
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- Herod had her executed when his sister convinced him Mariamme was conspiring against him: <http://www.bible-lands.net/cities/jerusalem/364-jerusalem-bible-study-herod-murders-mariamme>
- These three towers guarded Herod's fabulous palace: [http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem\\_herod\\_s\\_palace.html](http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem_herod_s_palace.html). After his son Archelaus was exiled and replaced by Roman governors, this building was used as the governor's residence during the Jewish Passover. It may have been the site of Jesus' trial before Roman governor Pontius Pilate.
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### **Digging Deeper: Apocryphal Accounts of Joseph**

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- Gospel of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0849.htm>
- The History of Joseph the Carpenter: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0805.htm>
- Mystical City of God: <http://yellowtie.com/MysticalCityOfGod.htm>

**REV. GREGORY SELTZ** is the Speaker of **The Lutheran Hour**, a position he has held since February 2011. As Speaker, Seltz is Lutheran Hour Ministries' (LHM) spiritual leader, evangelist and ministry emissary with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Lutheran Church—Canada. **The Lutheran Hour** airs on more than 1,350 stations across North America and the American Forces Network.

Before joining LHM, Seltz was the director of the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center and a professor of theology at Concordia University in Irvine, California. For more than a decade his work there trained students to launch ministries in a variety of cultural settings, including Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish, Indonesian, Indian and African-American.

Seltz holds a bachelor's degree in New Testament-biblical languages from Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He also has a master of divinity degree in systematics-New Testament and a master of sacred theology in systematics from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He is currently pursuing his doctorate there as well.

**DR. PAUL L. MAIER** is the Russell H. Seibert professor emeritus of ancient history at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. His novels include two historical documentaries, *Pontius Pilate* and *The Flames of Rome*, as well as *A Skeleton in God's Closet*—a theological thriller and #1 national bestseller in religious fiction. He has also penned two sequels, *More Than a Skeleton* and *The Constantine Codex*.

Maier lectures extensively, appearing frequently on radio, television and in newspapers. More than five million of his books are now in print in 20 languages.

## THANK YOU

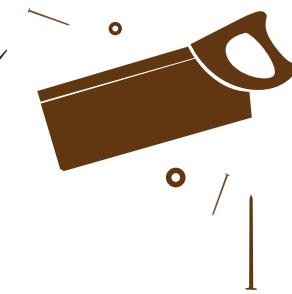
It is with special appreciation that the **Men's NetWork** acknowledges the following individuals for their financial contributions toward the production of this Bible study:

Mr. Keith Bohlken  
Mr. Steven Kaltwasser  
Rev. & Mrs. Martin Kaufmann  
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Moore  
Mr. Ron Morris  
Rev. Michael Mueller  
Rev. Kenneth Rankin  
Mr. Michael Richards  
Mr. Chris Townley  
Mr. & Mrs. Romolo Wente

## DEDICATION FROM THE AUTHOR

Dedicated to my father William, who left an incredible spiritual legacy to our entire family and entered Jesus' presence in paradise the day before I was ordained into the ministry.

—Rev. Wayne Palmer



The **Men's NetWork** is a Christ-centered, Scripture-guided, service-oriented fellowship committed to equipping and motivating men to greater levels of leadership and service as they become stronger disciples of Jesus Christ. At our website, [www.lhmmen.com](http://www.lhmmen.com), we offer video Bible studies, ministry tools to deepen men's faith, practical and easy-to-use resources for hands-on service projects, and other useful information for men's groups.



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